



Review

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The Mitchell Trio Song Book. Music edited by Walter Raim. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964. Pp. 144. \$6.95)

Broadside: Songs of Our Times from the Pages of Broadside Magazine. Edited by Sis Cunningham. (New York: Oak Publications, 1964. Vol. I, pp. 88. \$2.95)

Ramblin' Boy and Other Songs. By Tom Paxton. (New York: Oak Publications, 1965. Pp. 88. \$2.45)

As should be apparent to anyone alive today, singers in the United States have long listened to the strife that stirs our times. These three books are filled with songs that reflect this strife, often deliberately in the tradition of Woody Guthrie and others who sang out of a world that was often in pain.

Going through these three-hundred plus pages of songs primarily dedicated to protest is somewhat a chore because of the heavy concentration on civil rights, pacifism, air pollution, and so on *ad nauseam*. There is (except for Tom Paxton's book) almost no relief, comic or otherwise.

It is inconceivable to me that today's young men and women, however devoted they are to causes, have no other concerns than these. Thus, in my opinion, the claim of *Broadside* that it presents a representative sampling of what is being written today seems absurd. In fact, Tom Paxton has done a much better job with his own work: in addition to topical and protest songs, he has five songs for children, three "story" songs, several in the blues tradition, four love songs, and a clutch of songs that are just for fun.

All three books have a tendency (as is to be expected in songs that follow the folk tradition) to lean heavily on traditional tunes. Tom Paxton generally gives credit for his sources, but the other two waste no time giving credit to the folk tradition they claim to share. *The Mitchell Songbook*, for example, has a page and a half of copyright information, noting the exclusive possession of such brand new songs as "Ain't No More Cane on This Brazos," "Green Grow the Lilacs," "Queen Elinor's Confession," and "The Golden Vanity," to mention only a few. Nowhere in the book (to give another obvious example) is there any indication that the tune of "Super Skier" has any relation at all to that of "The Wreck of the Old 97."

The headnotes that do appear are frequently either confusing or asinine, especially in the Mitchell book. For "The Golden Vanity" with its clear and obvious story, there is a nine-line headnote "explaining" the story of the ballad. And for the swinging "Rum By

Gum" jibe at the Salvation Army, as the text names the organization, the following headnote is appended: "This was originally English. When it came here it was a parody satirizing the South Asian Army. People didn't think the South Asian Army deserved quite that bad, so they changed the focus to the Temperance Union." With all that erudition, it is curious that the names of the two groups are so markedly different—particularly when "South Asian Army" does sound somewhat like "Salvation Army."

Despite my quibbles, there are three good things about this set of books. One is the frequent skill displayed by Tom Paxton. The second is the introduction to *Broadside* by Gordon Friesen and the longer introduction by Robert Shelton in the Mitchell work. The third value I find is that at least the protest aspect of what passes today for folksong is well displayed, for better or for worse.

JOHN O. WEST

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Folk Songs of Japanese Children. Edited by Donald Paul Berger. (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1969, Pp. 65. \$6)

The publishers have produced a beautiful and charmingly illustrated book in this field of rather limited appeal and interest. If you happen to have a group of children four to six years old to work with, you can get some delightful results with these little songs. The simple melodies sound a bit strange and exotic to the Western ear, and to me at least a bit thin. But one should not expect otherwise in songs intended for childish voices.

GEORGE K. BRADY

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Folk Songs of Greece. Compiled, edited, arranged, and translated by Ted and Susan Alevizos. (New York: Oak Publications, 1968. Pp. 96. Illus. \$2.95)

The Greek songs selected to be included in this paperback belong to the periods before and after the Revolution of 1821, the former being more lyrical than usual and the latter being lighter and freer in meaning. It also includes the clever, sophisticated romantic songs of the islanders and the robust songs of the mainlanders. These holiday songs, lullabies, game songs, poetic songs, love songs, and dance songs are in Greek.

Ted and Susan Alevizos are eminently suited to collaborate and